

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 38.

Price, Five Cents.



JESSE, CARRYING THE HEAVY VALISE, SPRANG TOWARD HIS HORSE, WHILE FRANK ALSO COVERED THE MEN WITH HIS REVOLVERS.

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Price Five Cents.

THE JAMES BROTHERS' BIG PRIZE;

OR,

ROBBER AGAINST ROBBER.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANK CLERK'S PERIL.

"In one minute you will be a dead man!"

There was silence for an instant, and then, from the summit of a wooded hill away to the south, came two pistol shots, fired in quick succession.

"There's the signal, partner."

One of the two men standing there in the thicket with revolvers pointed at the heart of an unarmed man, glanced nervously in the direction of the sound as he spoke.

"Yes," was the reply, "there's some one coming. We must make quick work of it now."

The first speaker made a motion of disapproval, and pointed toward the south.

"We may as well wait until they pass," he said.

On every side stretched the rolling hills and pleasant valleys of Kentucky.

It was early morning in the month of March, and over

hill and field, and pleasant forest glade, lay the warm, sweet sunshine of the South.

But the evil-faced men, standing threateningly before the handsome, muscular young fellow they had doomed to death, were not thinking of the beauty of the morning, or of the scene in which they stood.

They were there to commit a brutal, cowardly murder, and were thinking only of the gold they were to receive for the deed.

The three men, the captive and the captors, listened intently for a moment without speaking.

There was a gleam of hope in the earnest, brown eyes of the young man who stood there so near his death.

His arms were crossed upon his breast, but every nerve and muscle in his splendid form was alert, and ready for action.

Presently the sharp ring of hoofs was heard, followed by the voices of two men engaged in conversation.

Almost involuntarily, Philip Griffith, the prisoner,

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leaned forward and made an effort to see through the thick fringe of bushes which shut out the country road.

The next instant the cold muzzle of a revolver came in contact with his forehead.

"One word, one motion designed to attract attention, and you fall dead in your tracks."

The voice was low and smooth, but all the passions of the evil one seemed to flash from the eyes of the speaker.

Griffith drew back.

The gleam of hope died out of his eyes.

Out there, beyond the line of underbrush which skirted the uneven roadway, there was life, and all that life means to the young and strong.

But here, only a few yards away, death peered from the shining muzzles of the desperadoes' weapons.

The voices of the two horsemen could now be distinctly heard.

"I don't understand those pistol shots," one of them said. "They sounded like a signal."

"It might have been a duel in the woods," said the other, with a laugh. "The people down here are up to that sort of thing."

"If I am not much mistaken," said the first speaker, "the shots both came from the same gun. We should have investigated the matter."

"If there is any chance for excitement in it," was the reply, "let us return. I am tired of the lazy life we are leading."

"I am a trifle weary myself," said the other, "but we may strike action sooner than you imagine."

Every word came clearly to the ears of the men waiting in the thicket.

The desperadoes hardly breathed.

They were anxious for the speakers to pass along, in order that they might set about their bloody task.

Griffith, resolving to make one desperate effort for his life, gathered all his strength for one quick spring.

Before he could carry out his intention, however, a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder.

The face of the desperado, standing there by his side, was pale as death, and his breath came hot on the young man's cheek.

In a moment Griffith understood what had happened.

The horsemen had halted in the road, directly in front of the little group!

A muttered oath escaped from the lips of the desperado as he bent forward and listened.

It was evident that the horsemen had dismounted, and were preparing to enter the thicket.

"They have discovered the marks of the scuffle we had in the road," said the fellow who had seized Griffith, "and we must fight if we remain here. Shall we retreat?"

By way of answer the fellow's companion pointed toward the road.

"It is too late," he said. "Get your gun ready."

The newcomers were already forcing their way through the heavy underbrush, and in a moment would be within sight of the three men.

The desperado was about to take his hand from Griffith's shoulder, in order that he might go into the fight with two weapons instead of one, when he caught the expression on the latter's face.

"Oh, you can't get away," he said, with a fierce oath. "I'll blow your brains out first!"

He leveled his revolver as he spoke.

The second desperado sprang forward.

"You must be mad," he said. "Save your bullets for the men who are armed."

The remonstrance came too late.

The desperado fired.

The bullet whizzed harmlessly over the head of the intended victim.

With a quick motion of his hand, Griffith had thrown up the muzzle of the revolver and darted away.

The men could be heard forcing their way through the thick underbrush, and the young man took that direction.

More than one bullet whizzed past his ears, but he remained uninjured, for the desperadoes were too excited to shoot well.

In a moment more he would be beyond the reach of his pursuers.

Then, at the very edge of the line of bushes, his foot caught in a tangle of vines, and he fell heavily to the earth.

In a second, before he could make a move to get on his feet, the desperado stood over him, the muzzle of his pistol pressing against his breast.

"Fate is against you," he said, grimly.

Griffith, realizing that successful resistance was impossible, closed his eyes.

"This is the last of earth," he thought.

He heard the strangers advancing through the thicket, but the sounds seemed miles away.

The distance between that leaden messenger and his heart was so very short.

Then he heard the sharp report of a pistol.

He wondered that he still possessed the power of thought and motion.

In a second, however, he realized that he was uninjured, although he could not understand why.

Surely there had been no chance for his enemy to miss his aim.

Then he heard a fall, and knew that some heavy body was holding him down.

Something warm spurted over his face and hands.

He held up the latter to find them covered with blood.

There was another pistol shot, and another fall, and then the young man put aside the dead body of the desperado, which had fallen across his breast, and staggered to his feet.

It seemed an age since, tripped by the tangled vines, he had fallen to the ground, although less than a minute had elapsed.

"Close call that, stranger."

Two men, wearing wide-brimmed slouch hats, and clad in stout, serviceable garments, stood leaning on repeating rifles just at the edge of the thicket.

Both were very muscular, and both would have been handsome but for the dare-devil cruelty which found expression in their eyes.

The younger man, certainly not more than five-and-twenty years of age, wore a heavy beard, while his companion, whom he greatly resembled, had only a mustache.

It was easy to see that the men were closely related to each other.

Besides the repeating rifles, which they carried in their hands, they each carried two heavy revolvers in their belts.

In stepping forward to meet the men who had saved his life, the young man's foot came in contact with the form which but a moment before had pinned him to the earth.

He stooped down and laid his finger on the wrist.

There was not the faintest flutter of the pulse.

The desperado had been shot through the heart.

"One shot is enough, eh, Frank?" said the younger man, with a light laugh.

"It was in your case, Jesse," was the reply, "but my man seems to be moving yet."

Griffith now approached the two men.

"You have saved my life," he said, not without emotion.

The two strangers looked puzzled for a moment, and then broke into a laugh.

For a moment the young man feared he had come across two escaped lunatics.

"To tell the truth," said the one who had been called Jesse, "we mistook you for another person. Don't thank us. Thank your resemblance to that other person."

"That is more than this fellow will be able to do," said Frank, pointing to the dead man lying only a few feet away.

"His death is no loss to the world, I guess," said Jesse, bending over the dead desperado. "He was making it rather warm for you," he added, turning to Griffith. "Do you know why?"

"I met these men for the first time to-day, and on this spot," was the reply. "There is no doubt that they intended to take my life, but I can't understand it at all."

"They look like men who could be hired to do that sort of thing," said Frank. "You must have a powerful enemy somewhere."

Griffith turned a shade paler.

"Yes," he said, in a moment, "I have an enemy both powerful and cruel, but I never dreamed of his proceeding to such extreme measures."

"His name?"

Griffith remained silent.

"Well," said Frank, "it may be as well for you to keep the matter to yourself, but you may rest assured of one thing, and that is that the man who sought your life to-day will seek it again. Be on your guard."

"Yes," replied Griffith, "from this time on I shall be hunted like a hare from State to State, and from land to land."

"Your enemy is wealthy?"

"He is worth millions."

"Then there is the law."

Frank mentioned the word with a sneer.

"The men who make and execute the laws are his friends and confederates."

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"You are in hard luck," said he who had been called Jesse. "You have still one remedy, however."

"And that is——"

"To meet your enemy alone, in a quiet place, and get the drop on him. Do you understand?"

Griffith shuddered.

"I can't do it," he said.

At that moment the desperado who had been referred to as only wounded was seen to make motions, as if desirous of calling the men to his side.

"We may learn something regarding the matter from him," said Frank, stepping forward.

But the desperado motioned the two strangers back, and seemed to be desirous of talking with Griffith alone.

The young man bent over the wounded outlaw.

As he did so, Jesse walked toward the thicket on the south, and, gun in hand, stopped at the edge and listened.

"What is it?" asked Frank, stepping to his side.

"Some one is cautiously making his way through the bushes," was the reply.

"Well?"

Jesse turned and pointed to the dead man.

"Have you forgotten the signal we heard from the hill over there to the south?" he asked.

"Certainly not."

"Well, that signal was given to notify these men of our approach."

"I suppose so."

"And now the fellow who gave the signal is coming down to see that his tools have done their work, eh?"

"Undoubtedly."

There was a short silence, and then Jesse turned to his brother.

"Frank," he said, as if doubtful regarding the favorable reception of the proposition he was about to make, "we may as well stay here and see the thing out?"

"That's my idea, Jesse."

"Then make for cover," said Jesse, "and we may be able to catch a glimpse of the man who hires others to do his killing."

In a moment the brothers were secreted in the thicket.

The person in the dense undergrowth beyond continued to advance cautiously toward the little opening where the exciting scenes just recorded had been enacted.

Griffith had raised the head of the wounded outlaw, and was listening intently to something he was saying.

The fellow spoke with difficulty, for his wound was a mortal one.

"He will follow you until you give up the girl," the outlaw was saying, "and, sooner or later, he will have your life."

"And you repeat that he hired you to do this thing?"

"Yes, oh, yes."

"Will you repeat it in the presence of these witnesses?"

"Yes; but you must hurry, for I am growing weak."

Griffith turned around to beckon the brothers to his side.

They were nowhere to be seen.

He listened for a moment, hoping to catch the sound of their departing footsteps.

The noise made by the person advancing through the thicket in the direction of the little opening came to his ears.

He dashed away in that direction.

The brothers heard two quick shots only a short distance away, and then the groans of the mortally wounded man in the clearing filled their ears.

They hastened to the place where he lay and bent over him.

He was dead.

CHAPTER II.

A PILE OF MONEY AND A PLOT.

A tempting pile of gold and banknotes lay on a table in the center of the room.

The value of the bundled notes and loosely-piled gold pieces was at least one hundred thousand dollars.

The room itself was small, and plainly furnished.

It was in the second story of a handsome residence overlooking on one side a quiet village street, and, on the other, one of those wooded valleys for which the State of Kentucky is famous.

A man long past middle age sat at one side of the table.

His white hair and mustache, his regular features and marble-like complexion, gave him the appearance of a gentleman of culture and great benevolence.

But those who studied the face closely rarely failed to detect the coarse, hard lines about the mouth, and the greedy, treacherous expression in the dark blue eyes.

Andrew Pratt stood well in the community in which he resided, because he was wealthy and well-connected, but

there was more than one who secretly disliked and mistrusted him.

No one knew where all the money he deposited in the village bank came from—that is, no one outside of his familiars.

Every month his deposits amounted to about one hundred thousand dollars, and the money was never drawn out for use, but was sent to the large cities and invested in stocks and bonds.

Pratt arose from the table, carrying in his hand a memorandum of the amounts in notes and coin, and stood by the window overlooking the valley to the north.

"There is a gain over last month," he muttered. "I wish all my affairs were in as good shape as is this branch of my business."

He stood there by the window a long time, watching the road which went down into the valley.

Presently a horseman, riding furiously, dashed out of a thicket far down in the hollow, and spurred his horse toward the village.

A moment later two more horsemen made their appearance, hot in pursuit of the first rider.

Andrew Pratt shut his teeth hard as he watched the exciting race.

"The fool, the blind fool," he muttered, "to ride this way when detected and followed. If the men who are traveling so close to his horse's heels saw anything down there in the forest, Mott's course will ruin us both."

But the first rider gained slowly on his pursuers, whose horses seemed to be anything but fresh.

Then the man at the window saw a flash of steel, and the next moment two light puffs of smoke circled in the air above the heads of the pursuers.

"The devils are shooting at him," groaned the old man. "They must have seen something terrible in the woods to justify such a course."

But the bullets of the pursuers seemed to go wide of their mark, for the man in advance rode on uninjured.

After firing the second time, the two riders put up their guns and turned their horses into the thicket again. In a moment they were out of sight.

Then the man whom Pratt had called Mott decreased the speed of his horse, and by the time he reached the gentle eminence upon which the house stood, there was nothing unusual in his appearance.

In a short time there came a quick, sharp knock on the door of the room where the old man stood.

"Come!"

The door opened, and the man who had been in deadly peril but a few moments before stepped, smiling, into the room.

"Well?"

Pratt advanced toward the fellow as he spoke.

There was a strained, eager look on the old man's face, and his hand trembled as he laid it on the table for support.

Mott threw himself into a chair, and lit a cigar.

He seemed to enjoy the agony of impatience which marked the cold face of his companion.

"I saw what took place down there in the hollow," Pratt said, in a moment.

"You mean the race and the shooting?"

"Certainly."

"You should have seen what took place in the thicket."

"Tell me about it. Is everything all right?"

"Yes, everything is all right. There are three dead men down in the valley."

"Three?"

Pratt sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

Mott regarded him with a hard stare for a moment, and then broke into a laugh.

"You are not in church now," he said, "so don't pose. It is hardly worth your while. Things could not be in better shape."

"But I don't understand."

"You saw the men who pursued me?"

"Yes."

"Well, they killed Jim and Mack, and I did the same kind office for your very good friend Griffith."

"You?"

"Yes. It seems that Jim and Mack got the drop on Griffith, and were about to earn their money in good shape, when the men you saw came up and settled their hash."

"Go on."

"I heard the shots, and crept down into the valley. I met Griffith working his way out of the thicket, and you know what followed."

"I am sorry for Jim and Mack."

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"Pshaw! Their tongues were too long. It is just as well that they are out of the way. Whew! but those fellows gave me a hard run."

Pratt walked to the window, and stood looking out into the valley.

"Three dead men in that quiet patch of woods," he said. "There will be great excitement when the bodies are discovered."

"I suppose so."

"And you will be identified by the men who pursued you. It was a rash step, your coming here. It may ruin everything."

Mott laughed uneasily.

"You have nothing to fear from them," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"They dare not show themselves here."

Pratt looked at his companion in amazement.

"Why not?" he asked.

"There is a price on both their heads."

"Do you mean that there are rewards out for them?"

"Yes, rewards amounting to more than twenty thousand dollars."

"In Heaven's name, who are they?"

"Frank and Jesse James!"

Pratt glanced at the money on the table, and, almost involuntarily, dropped his hand toward his pistol-pocket.

Mott saw the motion, and smiled grimly.

"How do you know that the men you saw are Frank and Jesse James?" demanded Pratt.

"You forget that I lived for years in Clay County, Missouri, the home of the James boys."

"True."

There was a short silence, during which Pratt nervously rattled a heap of gold pieces with one white, trembling finger.

"Do you think they will come here?" he asked, finally.

"They are here."

"You know what I mean. Do you think they suspect that such a sum of money is in this house?"

"I don't know what to think. They may have heard of your habit of depositing a large sum in bank at one time."

Pratt began gathering up the money.

"I'll hide it away," he said, "and have the house guarded."

Mott smiled grimly, and amused himself by tossing a gold piece into the air and catching it.

"The James boys are not sneak thieves or burglars," he said. "If they take a notion to relieve you of this wealth, they will probably ride through one of the lower windows and take it, all in the broad light of day."

"It's just my luck to have them show up at this time," grumbled Pratt. "I can't understand how they came to shoot Jim and Mack."

"They saw two men blazing away at one, I suppose, and it was like them to take a hand in the game. I wonder if they went back to Griffith after they grew weary of shooting at me?"

Pratt started.

"Suppose Griffith should not be dead," he said, with a tremble in his voice.

"But he is dead," was the reply. "There was not the slightest motion in pulse or heart. Poor Bertha!"

"Why do you say that?" demanded Pratt, an angry flush creeping into his face. "You murder your rival, and then become sentimental over his death."

Mott's face grew grave in an instant.

"I can never win your daughter's heart," he said.

"You talk nonsense," was the reply. "Now that Griffith is out of the way, you have a clear field."

Mott made no reply.

He walked up and down the little room for a moment, and then turned almost fiercely upon his companion.

"Where did you first meet Griffith?" he demanded. "You have always remained silent regarding him."

Pratt looked surprised, but he answered readily enough.

"He came here and found employment in the bank."

"Yes."

"And finally presented letters of introduction to me."

"From whom?"

"From a—a relative in Philadelphia."

"Well?"

"Years ago I knew his father, and we had some dealings together. We parted in anger, and the elder Griffith went to the dogs. I have never seen him since we closed our business relations."

"I can imagine how you closed them," said Mott, dryly.

"Well, Philip came here, and fell in love with my daughter. His love was returned. Then the young fellow began to investigate the affairs of the old firm of Griffith & Pratt."

"The more fool he. What did he discover?"

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"That every dollar I am worth actually belonged to him."

"Whew!"

"Every dollar," repeated the old man.

"Why didn't you let him marry the girl?"

Pratt sprang to his feet in a passion.

"I hated the sight of him," he shouted. "I swore that he should never touch a dollar of my money—should never become the husband of the splendid woman who will inherit it all. You see how I have kept my vow. He lies there in the thicket."

"But by no act of yours. After your murderers had failed, I was obliged to kill him in self-defense."

"In self-defense! And he was unarmed."

Mott turned his eyes to the floor, and made no reply.

He was a small man, with pale blue eyes and very light hair. His forehead was low and retreating, and the whole expression of his freckled face was that of cunning.

He had been in the place but a few months, and was already disliked in the little village.

He was known as "Pratt's clerk," and it was generally believed that he "had some hold on the old man."

No one suspected that the mild-looking little fellow was one of Pratt's truest agents in an unlawful scheme, and had, therefore, become almost a necessity in the magnificent residence on the hill.

At once cunning, brave and unscrupulous, Mott was just the tool Pratt needed in his business.

After a short silence, Mott pointed to the money, which the old man was packing into a smaller space on the table.

"What are you going to do with it?" he asked.

"Put it in bank."

"With the James boys in the neighborhood?"

Pratt looked perplexed.

"Where shall I put it?" he demanded.

"Keep it in the house for a day or two."

The old man began packing the money into a huge leather valise.

"I'll hide it away somewhere," he said.

Mott passed through the doorway, and started downstairs.

Pratt called him back.

"Don't say anything about the James boys being in the neighborhood," he said, "but pick up half a dozen men and send them here."

"All right."

Mott went on downstairs, and the old man went back to his money.

He counted and gloated over it until noon, then there came a soft knock at the door.

"Hurry, papa," said a girlish voice, on the other side of the heavy panels, "the strangest thing has happened. Two men have been murdered down in the valley, and they are bringing the bodies to the village."

"Only two?"

The old man spoke before he thought.

"Only two?" repeated the voice on the other side of the door. "Why do you say only two? What do you know about it?"

"Nothing, child. Run away. I have no time to bother with dead people. It takes all my time to care for the living."

The girl went back downstairs, and Pratt hastened to the window, and looked along the valley road.

The entire population of the little village seemed to be gathering in the valley below.

"Who found the bodies?" he heard one man shout to a companion.

"Two strangers," was the reply.

"Where are they?" demanded the first speaker. "They may be the murderers."

"They mounted their horses and rode away," was the reply, "and mighty fine riders they are, too."

The village was practically deserted.

At last the money was all in the valise, and then the old man took it in his hand, for the purpose of carrying it downstairs.

When he opened the door he heard the voices of half-a-dozen men in the hallway below, and knew that Mott had secured the guards he had ordered.

At that instant the tramp of horses' feet was heard outside.

When Pratt reached the lower hall, Mott was opening the door.

"Hurry!"

The voice outside was imperative, and the next moment a bullet cut its way through the panel, and went spinning down the hall.

Then the door flew open with a bang, and two horsemen appeared in the doorway.

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One of them sprang to the ground, and darted into the hall, while the other kept the old man and his clerk and guards covered with two heavy revolvers.

"If you don't want the tops of your heads blown off," he said, in the calmest tone in the world, "stand where you are, and throw up your hands. We only want the money the old man there stole from the people last month."

The old man cried out to his guards to protect him, but all stood helpless before the flashing, cruel eyes of Jesse James.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT BECAME OF THE BLACK VALISE.

When Jesse James sprang into the hallway of the Pratt residence, Mott dodged back so as to place the guards between himself and the daring robber.

He knew that the James boys would recognize him as the man they had chased out of the thicket.

One reckless word from them would place him before the people of the little village in the light of a murderer.

He knew that he was already suspected and disliked, and he feared the outcome of such a charge, even with known outlaws as his accusers.

Besides, he reasoned, he might be able to escape by a rear door in the confusion, and so give the alarm to the village.

Even in that moment of peril, the cunning fellow thought of the magnificent reward offered for the capture of the daring robbers.

He understood then why the men who had protected Griffith from the paid murderers of his employer had revealed the presence of the dead men in the thicket.

It was a scheme on their part to get the male population of the place out of the way while they secured the old man's money.

As Mott moved away, however, the hawk-like eyes of the younger brother sought him out.

In an instant a pistol was leveled at his heart.

"Step forward, young fellow!"

There was nothing to do but to obey the rough summons, and Mott advanced to the front.

His hands were raised high above his head, and his eyes looked appealingly into those of the outlaw.

"Don't refer to what took place down there a while ago."

His eyes conveyed the plea as plainly as words could have done.

A scornful smile passed over the face of the outlaw.

"You live here?" he demanded.

Mott nodded.

"And you are in the employ of that old man?"

"Yes."

"Then it is easy to understand the events of the morning."

The face of the old man looked like the face of a dead man, so white and drawn was it with this new terror.

The robbers had guessed the truth.

The prospect of losing the valuable contents of the valise was now a secondary consideration. What if the outlaws should tell what they had seen?

"You are a brave pair," said Jesse, in a moment. "What have you in that valise?" Hand it here."

Before any one could make answer, there was a quick movement at the rear end of the hallway.

One of the guards had slipped through the rear door and made his escape.

Jesse sent a bullet through a panel of the door, and bounded forward to the spot where Pratt stood.

The old man bent over to seize the valise, but a blow from the outlaw stretched him senseless on the floor.

As Jesse stooped to raise the valise, a succession of excited cries came from the street outside.

The pistol shot and the shouts of the man who had escaped had already attracted the attention of the people returning from the valley.

Frank James, sitting in the saddle, just outside the door, heard the shots, and saw a crowd gathering but a short distance away.

Many of the villagers had armed themselves before proceeding to the thicket, and the display of guns and revolvers in the assemblage was formidable, to say the least.

"Make haste," he shouted to Jesse. "We must fight our way out of this accursed trap."

Encouraged by the prospects of assistance from the outside, the guards now gathered about the valise and the prostrate figure of the old man.

"Stand back!"

The guards, with their eyes still fixed on the door, suddenly retreated a few paces and stopped.

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One muscular fellow, evidently armed with a pistol, lowered his hand.

There was a quick, sharp report, and the fellow lay dead on the floor of the hall.

The others crowded back against the wall.

"This is no time for foolishness."

As he spoke, Jesse raised the valise from the place where it had fallen, and backed slowly away toward the front.

"Be quick, Jesse!"

Shots were now heard in the street.

A score or more of the villagers were advancing upon the robbers.

The words were hardly out of the elder brother's mouth when a rifle ball passed through his coat sleeve.

Jesse, carrying the heavy valise in his hand, sprang toward his horse.

The men inside the house were still covered by the revolvers in Frank's hands, but in the general excitement they rushed forward.

Mott darted toward the rear door and disappeared, closely followed by a bullet from the outlaw's weapon.

The next moment he was seen running toward the group of armed men.

"Shoot!" he shouted, excitedly. "Shoot them down like dogs! They are Frank and Jesse James!"

The announcement did not have the desired effect.

Instead of advancing with a rush, the men drew back.

For an instant no one was brave enough to engage in deadly combat with the noted outlaws.

"Shoot, shoot, shoot!" roared Mott. "The man who brings one of them down receives a reward of twenty thousand dollars!"

Then greed took the place of courage.

A scattering fire swept along the streets.

But the men were excited, and the bullets flew wide of their mark.

By this time Jesse was in the saddle, and the horses' heads were turned toward the north.

Frank had the stronger animal, and the heavy valise was passed over to him.

"Now shoot to kill!" shouted Jesse.

The outlaws set spurs to their horses, and dashed away, shooting to the right, and left, and rear, as they went.

Pratt, who, on account of his years and apparently feeble condition, had received only a slight blow, staggered to his feet as the men sped away.

His first thought was of the hundred thousand dollars in the valise, now resting easily on the front of Frank James' saddle.

His rage amounted almost to insanity when he saw that the money was gone.

"You are all cowards!" he shouted, shaking his fists at the group of men about him.

Mott tried in vain to calm him.

"We were four to one," he shouted, "and yet they robbed me in my own house, and in the broad light of day."

The young man pointed to the dead man lying on the floor of the hallway.

"He resisted the robbers," he said, "and you see what happened to him".

The old man dashed into the street, just in time to see a second man fall before the deadly aim of Jesse James.

Those who were not in active pursuit of the robbers gathered around Pratt, with expressions of sympathy on their lips.

But the old man would not listen.

"After them!" he screamed. "Ten thousand dollars to the man who restores yonder black valise."

"And ten thousand extra for the James boys," added Mott; "and the reward holds good whether they are brought back dead or alive."

Mott preferred having the men brought back dead.

He did not care to have the only witness to his cowardly shooting in the thicket put on trial in that community.

Pratt continued to rave up and down the street, calling frantically for a horse and a gun.

"There is treachery somewhere," he said. "How did the villains learn that the money was in the house?"

He looked suspiciously at Mott, as he gave utterance to this last expression.

"No one knew the money was there," he continued, "except the members of my own family. There is something very suspicious about the whole affair—something which must be explained."

Mott laid his hand on the old man's arm.

"Be careful what you say," he said. "Do you think

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young Griffith, in his capacity of clerk at the bank, knew?"

"He knew that it is my custom to make a very large deposit about this time in the month," replied the old man.

Mott turned away, with a scared look on his face.

"It is barely possible," he thought, "that neither one of my shots inflicted a fatal wound. In that case, the robbers might have received their information from Griffith. Yes, that is the only way the occurrence can be accounted for."

But where was Griffith?

Had the James boys conveyed him to a place of safety?

There was not a doubt of it in the minds of the scheming young man, who had resorted to such desperate means for the removal of his rival but a few hours before.

"If Griffith still lives," he thought, "I shall have no peace, night or day. I must learn the truth at all hazards, and settle the matter for good and all."

As a matter of fact, Griffith was found, a few days later, in a cabin in the woods, where the James boys had taken him.

A number of horsemen now rode up, and, after a short consultation, dashed down the valley road.

The James boys were still in sight, and now and then a shot was fired after them.

Mott gave a whispered order to a servant, and in a very short time was mounted on the back of the splendid animal whose speed had already once saved his life that day.

Instead of joining in the pursuit, however, he spurred his horse down a narrow lane and came out, after a short ride, on a road running parallel with the one taken by the robbers.

Then he turned to the north, and forced his horse along at the top of his speed.

"If they have a hiding-place anywhere in this part of the country," he thought, "it certainly is located in the vicinity of yonder rocky hills, and there Griffith will be found, if he is still alive."

Mott had no idea that the James boys would be either killed or captured, and his idea was to reach some point in the wild locality toward which he was riding, from which he might observe the actions of the outlaws, who had had plenty of time to remove and care for the wounded man.

If Griffith was alive, that surely was the easiest way to find him.

In the meantime, Frank and Jesse James, pursued by as wild and revengeful a mob as ever chased an outlaw, at a safe distance, were riding fast for their lives.

Their horses were not the blooded animals they usually rode, and the riders behind gained slowly upon them.

Half-way down the valley, Jesse turned in his saddle, and looked back at the flying horsemen.

There were at least a score of them.

"In five minutes," he said, "they will be within shooting distance."

"Yes," said the elder brother, "and we must think as well as act. Have you any scheme in your mind?"

Jesse shook his head.

"Wait until the time comes," he said.

In a very short time the bullets of the pursuers were whizzing past the ears of the outlaws.

"This will never do," said Frank. "We may as well turn into the thicket here, and abandon our horses."

"That is a slow way of getting out of the country," suggested the younger brother.

"It can't be helped," was the reply. "Once in the shelter of the woods, we may elude them until we can pick up decent horses. We shall be killed if we continue in our present course."

Just ahead was a little bend in the road.

It was agreed that when they reached that point they should turn their horses into the thicket on one side of the highway, and take to the woods on the other.

In this way they might throw their pursuers off the track for a short time.

"We are almost there," shouted Frank, in a moment. "When the bend conceals us from view, force your horse into the woods on the right, and jump for the opposite side of the road."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the sound of hoofs came from the direction of the turn.

"Cornered!"

"Out with your guns and shoot!"

The next moment the outlaws whirled around the little turn.

There they found themselves confronted by four horsemen.

Alarmed by the shooting in the direction of the village,

the planters living farther down the valley had armed themselves, and started for the scene of the disturbance.

Behind the four came half-a-dozen others.

As the James boys dashed around the bend, the planters halted their horses, and stood in a silent, threatening line across the narrow road.

Every man had his revolver ready for use.

"Halt!"

The answer was quick and to the point.

It came in the shape of a volley of pistol balls.

Two horses galloped away riderless.

"Straight ahead, Frank!"

"Down with them, Jesse!"

The daring men swept beyond the first line in a second, but there were the horsemen farther down the road!

"Are you hit?"

Jesse asked the question, as Frank swayed in his saddle.

"It is nothing," was the reply. "Shoot at the men in the middle of the road, and keep moving."

The men ahead bunched their horses and waited for the attack.

They did not intend to allow the men who had murdered their neighbors before their eyes to escape.

"Shoot at the horses!" shouted one.

"Shoot at the riders!" shouted another.

"Ride them down!" muttered Jesse James, between his set teeth.

And ride them down they did.

The shock of the collision forced three men from the saddle, and the steady weapons of the outlaws emptied two more.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The bullets flew like hail, but for a moment the James boys kept their seats.

Then Frank's horse fell heavily to the ground, landing the rider in a cluster of bushes to the left of the road.

Jesse sprang from his horse and darted into the thicket.

The pursuers from the village galloped around the bend.

Frank and Jesse gained the shelter of two giant trees.

"After them, boys!"

"They are hiding behind the trees!"

"Into the woods!"

But the pursuers did not charge into the woods.

They contented themselves with shouting and firing at random.

They were too cautious to again place themselves within range of the death-dealing weapons of the dreaded James boys.

As none of the bullets thus fired, without purpose, except to make a noise, came within several yards of the trees behind which Frank and Jesse had taken refuge, the boys felt comparatively safe.

They finished reloading their weapons.

As the James boys dodged from tree to tree, Indian fashion, the firing in front, which had gradually died away, was resumed with increased vigor.

"That's strange," said Jesse, pausing behind the tree which sheltered his brother; "the firing has shifted to the north and east."

"That's a fact," replied the other. "Whatever they are doing, they are not shooting at us."

The brothers stood still, unable to account for the strange and fortunate occurrence.

Presently the hoarse, excited voice of one of the villagers reached their ears.

"Be careful!" he shouted to some companion in the distance. "They have confederates on the east side of the road. Martin just got a ball in the back."

"That explains it all," said Frank, with a smile. "Cole Younger, Jim White and the Shephard boys are over there, stirring up the animals after the old style."

Jesse gazed at his brother in amazement.

"I didn't know they were in the State," he said.

"I left them up in Nelson County," said Frank, "and it was understood at the time of my departure that they were to come here."

"And you never said a word to me about it?"

"There was plenty of time," was the reply. "They were not due here until next week."

"Well," said Jesse, "they came just in time. We may as well work over that way, and take a hand in this new game."

"The outlaw started away as he spoke.

Frank called him back.

"Wait," he said.

"Wait? What for?"

Jesse seemed very much annoyed.

"The boys can take care of themselves," said Frank, in explanation.

"But we want to be in at the death, don't we?"

"The chances are," replied Frank, "that they are mounted, and that they opened up on the mob for the express purpose of giving us a chance to get away, for they must have known that we kicked up the rumpus."

Jesse was not satisfied.

"We'll lose track of them," he said, "if we stand idle here."

Frank pointed to a rocky ridge, some distance to the north.

"We are to meet them there," he said.

"Well, let's be moving," said Jesse, impatiently. "We want to recapture that black valise."

"Yes, curse the luck!" said Frank. "Only for the old wound that kept me in bed so long in Nelson County, I could have carried it away. What a fall the horse did give me!"

"You had all you could do to carry yourself away," said the younger brother, with a smile. "I thought for a moment that you had been struck by a bullet, and knocked out for good."

Frank threw open his coat and vest, and revealed a blood-stained shirt.

"It is only a trifle," he said. "I was lucky to get off so easily. You came off without a scratch, as usual?"

"Yes, without a scratch. Let us be moving."

CHAPTER IV.

A RUN ON THE BANK.

"Clear the street!"

"Into your houses, every one of you!"

"Straight ahead to the bank, boys!"

The exclamations were liberally punctuated with pistol shots.

A dozen horsemen, headed by Jesse and Frank James, were riding furiously down the village street, in the direction of the bank.

The clatter of hoofs brought the residents of the place to their doors and windows, but the volleys of bullets which marked the progress of the riders caused them to seek safety in the interior of their houses and places of business.

Each horseman was armed with two pairs of revolvers.

With the reins in their teeth, they shot right and left. Relentless as doom itself, the outlaws dashed on.

"Keep in your houses, and keep quiet!" shouted the leader to the frightened people, as the band galloped along, "and you shall not be harmed."

Half a block from the bank two members of the band drew rein and faced to the rear.

This was done in accordance with orders previously issued.

The robbers had no idea of allowing a crowd to collect about them while they were stripping the bank.

Thus guarded in the rear, the raiders swept on to the bank.

Jesse James and Cole Younger sprang from their horses and entered.

The other members of the party remained on guard in the street.

An occasional shot notified the men in the bank that their sentinels were attending strictly to business.

It was just after nine o'clock, and the cashier had recently opened the safe.

When Jesse and Younger entered, the books were lying on the counters, ready for the clerks to begin the labors of the day.

The cashier was busy counting a heap of gold coin.

"Never mind that," said Jesse. "We'll take your word for the amount."

The cashier looked up to see a pair of revolvers within an inch of his nose.

He understood the situation in a moment.

His first thought was of the bank funds.

He sprang toward the safe, the door of which stood wide open.

His idea was to close and lock it.

Then the robbers would secure only the small amount of money on the paying teller's desk.

But the cashier did not have time to close the safe.

"Stop!"

There was no mistaking the order.

With his hand within an inch of the safe door, the cashier stopped and looked back.

"Let that door alone!"

The cashier was very pale, and his hand trembled, but his nerve held out.

He reached for the safe again.

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"Go back to your desk, or I'll blow your brains out!" Moving along like one in a dream, the cashier obeyed. There was nothing else for him to do.

Before he could close the door and throw on the combination, he would be riddled with bullets.

The loss of his life could not save the bank from loss.

Leaving the official in charge of Cole Younger, Jesse paid his respects to the safe, taking everything in sight, including a few stamps.

Younger swept the gold off the counter, and stowed it away in one of his capacious pockets.

When Jesse left the safe, he placed the stamps before the cashier.

"You may want to mail some letters to-day," he said, with a grin.

The robbers were greeted with a cheer from their associates when they appeared at the door of the bank, with the bags which they had taken in empty, well-filled with bank-notes and jingling coin.

A crowd was collecting in the street, but the people took good care to keep out of pistol range.

"A brave haul, boys," Jesse said. "Now up and away."

Shooting to the right and left again, the robbers dashed out of the village.

They had, however, been ordered not to shoot at the people on the street.

The shooting was simply done to intimidate the villagers and keep them quiet until the raiders could make their escape.

The inhabitants, however, made no effort to oppose the robbers.

They seemed helpless against the wild daring of the outlaws.

Led by Jesse James and Cole Younger, the adventurers dashed out of the place like a whirlwind.

"How much is there?" asked Younger, as they rode along.

"There must be more than the black valise contained yesterday," was the reply, "for the old man banked his money last night, after hours."

"Then the bank will have to stand the loss?"

"I suppose so."

"It's too bad," said Younger. "The old man is the fellow we were after."

"We'll get him yet," replied Jesse.

"How?"

Jesse did not reply for some moments.

They were not yet out of the village, and members of the band were still shooting to keep the people back.

The valley road was finally reached, however, and then Jesse turned to his companion.

"Do you know how the old man gets his money?" he asked.

"No."

"He runs a snide lottery."

"One of the kind in which the owner draws all the big prizes?"

"Exactly."

"Where do the drawings take place?"

"In a Southern city. You shall know all about it in time."

"Why not now?"

"My plans are not yet matured."

"Well, remember that I'm in with the deal."

"You see," said Jesse, "the old fellow's agent rents an opera-house, and makes a big spread of the drawing."

"Of course."

"The big prize is one hundred thousand dollars, and he has that sum in gold on the stage."

"And pays it out there?"

"Yes, if the owner of the lucky ticket is in the house."

"And the owner of the lucky ticket is some one in with the game?"

"Certainly."

"Then the whole thing is easy."

"Too easy for anything," replied Jesse."

"Well," laughed Younger, "you have succeeded in telling me about all there is to know of the scheme, after all."

"The plan forms in my mind as I talk," was the reply.

"Then keep on talking. How are you going to get the money? On the way to the opera-house?"

"I think not."

"How, then?"

"Unless I change my mind, I shall walk up on the stage, with a few good men, and insist on drawing the big prize."

Cole Younger fairly shrieked with laughter.

"That will be a good thing for the papers," he said, "but what will the audience be doing?"

"Sitting there."

"Sitting there shooting, probably."

"Not much. They will understand that for once the big prize is being paid to a man not in with the scheme."

"It is a bold plan, Jesse."

"The bold undertakings are the ones that win."

"Yes, that seems to be the fact."

After riding some distance to the north, the outlaws turned to the west, and rode rapidly for a dozen miles or more; then they turned to the south, making for the wild country across the Cumberland River.

"The whole country will be out after us in a short time," said the leader, "and we must get out of the State."

"Haven't we lost time traveling north?" asked Younger.

"By no means," was the reply. "The pursuers will probably keep on going north."

"I see."

"Besides," continued Jesse, "I wanted to reach the road we are now traveling. There is a little town down here where they have a great game."

"Poker?"

"No; faro."

"You can't let the cards alone when you have money, can you?"

"I don't want to let them alone. I don't usually lose, do I?"

"I never knew you to lose any large sum," was the reply.

"Then don't grumble if I steer the gang against one of the biggest faro bank rolls in the West."

"I may take a stack myself," said Younger.

Keeping straight south through Todd County, the robbers crossed the Tennessee line near Guthrie, where they overtook Frank James.

The wound of the elder brother had proven more serious than he had at first supposed; besides, he was still suffering from the injuries which had laid him up so long in Nelson County.

It was therefore thought best for him to set out early on the morning of the raid on the bank, and make his way along the road which the outlaws were to follow.

This would save him both the exertion and the excitement of a rapid dash across the country.

He pursued this course with much reluctance, for he wanted to be with the boys whenever bullets were flying.

As the band dashed up to the river bank, Frank rode out of a piece of woods.

He looked pale and ill, and Jesse decided to rest for the night on the bank of the stream.

The men had had a long ride, and it was nearly dark, so the proposition met with favor.

"I'd like to know how we are going to get across in the morning," said Younger, looking out on the wide expanse of swiftly-flowing water.

"There's a ferry just below," said Frank. "I have been down there, talking with the men in charge."

Jesse walked away, buried in thought.

"It will never do for the whole party to cross here," he said, in a short time. "The officers will spot us sure, and then we shall have a race through Tennessee."

"That is all provided for," said Frank. "I explained to the men at the ferry that I had been up in the State buying blooded horses, and that the drove would be along, in charge of two men, some time in the night; so you see that part of it is all right."

"Good idea," said Jesse.

"But how are the boys to get across?" asked Younger.

"There are plenty of boats scattered along the river," replied the elder brother. "They must take one and row across."

"Then the missing boat, added to the fact of such a lot of horses crossing in the night, may furnish a clew," said Younger.

"One of the men must bring the boat back, and go over with the horses," said Frank.

"You haven't been asleep, if you are sick," said Jesse, with a laugh. "I guess you have fixed things about right."

The men had previously supplied themselves with provisions, and a good supper was soon laid out in the forest.

"This seems like old times," said Jesse. "I wonder what the folks do to amuse themselves in this vicinity?"

"Where's your faro game?" asked Younger.

"At a little landing not far away, but the yahoos hereabouts know nothing of it."

"Then who supports the game?"

"Horsemen and gamblers from the river steamers," was the reply.

"Going down?" asked Younger.

"Of course."

"Then I'm going with you."

"All right. We can trust to Frank to get the men and horses over, and we can join the party in the morning."

After supper the two outlaws started away.

"How much money are you taking?" asked Younger.

"Ten thousand dollars, in large bills," was the reply.

"The rest of the money is in Frank's care."

"I have only the gold I raked off the cashier's table," said Younger. "You'll have to stake me if I go broke."

"All right."

After a short walk, the robbers reached a dilapidated old building, standing in a grove, not far from the bank of the Cumberland River.

Not far away was a landing where the river steamers procured wood and took on and discharged freight.

A large passenger and freight steamer was pulling out as the outlaws walked up.

"That's lucky," said Jesse. "Remember, when we get in there, that we are sports from St. Louis, and that we just missed that boat."

Entering the house, the men found themselves in a long room, with a huge fireplace on one side and a bar on the other.

A dozen or more slick-looking fellows were lounging about the room.

"What time does the next boat leave?"

Jesse asked the question of the bartender.

"May be one along in the morning," was the reply.

"This is a nice place to spend the night," said the robber, with a scowl. "No chance for fun here, I suppose?"

"Where you from?"

"St. Louis."

"By boat?"

"No; across country, and a cursed bad country at that."

"Well," said the bartender, "the boys are running a little game upstairs, but it's on the quiet."

"Just the thing," said Jesse. "Can we get in?"

"I suppose so."

The fellow left the room abruptly, but returned in a few moments, and reported that everything was all right.

"Been to supper?" asked the bartender.

The men had eaten heartily at the camp, but they went through the motions of eating, in order to ward off suspicion.

In half an hour they were in the gambling-room.

Half-a-dozen men were playing faro, while as many more were deep in the mysteries of draw poker.

"How high?" asked Jesse, laying a hundred-dollar bill on the table.

"Twenty-five case and fifty double."

Both men bought stacks, and began to play.

In a moment the sound of angry words, followed by a scuffle, was heard at the poker table.

Jesse turned around.

"You took the card from the bottom," said a slim young fellow who was, evidently, just learning the game.

His opponent, a professional gambler, drew a revolver.

Younger touched Jesse on the shoulder.

"That bully is the man who shot at you in St. Louis," he said.

"Then he dies," whispered Jesse, "for he will recognize us here."

"Take that back," yelled the bully to his opponent in the game, "or I'll put a hole through you big enough for a railway tunnel."

"No, you won't!"

Every person in the room turned toward the faro table, at which Jesse was still seated.

The slim young fellow, in the general excitement, slipped out of the door.

"What is it to you?" demanded the bully.

He saw that Jesse had the drop on him, and spoke in a quiet tone.

"You'd better give the young man the money you stole from him on a foul hand," said Jesse, coolly.

This was too much for the gambler.

He raised his weapon and fired.

There were two reports instead of one, and Jesse's revolver spoke first.

The gambler plunged forward and fell dead across the table.

His bullet entered the wall, just above the head of the outlaw.

The gambler's friends rushed forward, and the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard on the stairs and in the hall outside.

The two outlaws retreated to the wall of the room, and stood with their weapons ready for action.

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CHAPTER V.

A NERVOUS SHERIFF.

"We got in action quick enough," said Younger, as the two men stood with their backs against the wall. "I wonder what'll turn up next?"

The dealer sprang from his chair, and began putting away the layout.

"We can't deal in this kind of a racket," he said.

"Before you pack away the money drawer," said Jesse, coolly, "suppose you hand out that hundred-dollar bill. The chips are there on the table."

The dealer wanted the money, and the chips, too.

"The game is closed," he said. "You should have cashed in before you began shooting."

Jesse moved the muzzle of one of his revolvers so that it covered the dealer.

"Put that money out here," he said, "or I'll be looking through your head at the wall in a minute."

The fellow seemed to understand what kind of a man he had to deal with, for he passed out the money, and then asked how much Younger had invested in chips.

"One hundred," said the outlaw.

The fellow paid it, without a word.

"Now get out," he said.

At that moment a small bell hanging over the table began to ring violently.

The clamor at the door increased.

The players began to huddle around a corner of the room, close to where Jesse and Younger were standing.

The man who had been guarding the door hastened to turn out the lights.

"Hurry," he whispered. "That means that the officers heard the shooting, and are coming up."

"Officers in this place?" exclaimed Jesse.

"There's been too much shooting going on here lately," was the reply, "and the place has been watched for some time. Hurry out."

Then a secret door in the corner where the players had collected opened softly, and the frightened fellows crept down a winding stairway ending in the cellar.

In the general anxiety to get away from the officers, the friends of the dead gambler had no time to avenge the death of their chum.

Jesse James and Younger were the last ones through the door.

When they reached the cellar, the men who had preceded them were out of sight.

The place was very dark, and, whichever way they turned, they met a solid wall.

"This may be a trap," said Younger.

"It looks like it," was the reply.

Jesse struck a match, and looked around the place.

The only means of exit seemed to be the stairway by which they had entered.

They listened, but could hear nothing.

Jesse ascended the winding stairs to the ground floor, and struck another match.

There was no door in sight.

"It's an infernal trap," he said, returning to where Younger was standing. "What shall we do?"

"Go back to the faro room and shoot our way out."

"That's the stuff, Younger. You're a man after my own heart."

The prospect of a fight seemed to please the outlaw greatly.

The two men went back upstairs, and were soon at the secret door.

Listening carefully, they heard voices on the other side.

"Then you don't know the man who did the shooting?" asked a voice.

"A stranger here," was the reply.

"What was he like?"

The person of whom the question had been asked gave a very fair description of Jesse.

"That's our man, all right enough," said another voice. "It's Jesse James."

"Jesse James!"

The voice of the dealer fairly trembled.

"Yes," was the reply. "He's been turning things over up the country, and we're after him and his gang. I'm the sheriff of Logan County."

"They came here alone," said the dealer.

"The gang is not far away," was the answer. "We mean to hunt every inch of ground over as soon as it gets light in the morning."

There came a knock on the door of the room.

The listening men heard some one open it, and then all was still for a moment.

Presently the door closed again, and then the dealer spoke, his voice unsteady with excitement.

"If we help you get these men," he said, "are we in with the reward?"

"Certainly."

"Well, we have them trapped."

"Trapped? James trapped!"

"Exactly," was the reply.

"How, and where?"

"They are in the cellar this minute, and there is no way for them to get out."

The dealer hesitated. He did not desire to give away his scheme to the local officers who were with the sheriff of Logan County.

He did not care to tell them that a passage led from the cellar to the bank of the river, and that the door to that passage had been closed purposely by the friends of the dead gambler, in order to get even with the man who had killed their friend.

"Never mind the details," said the sheriff, seeing how matters stood. "We don't care how he got into the cellar, as long as he is there."

"He's there, all right enough, and can't get out," was the reply.

"Well, let's go and get him."

"But how? He's mighty quick with his gun," said the dealer.

"Why not starve them out?" suggested another.

"It will take too long," said the sheriff. "We have to capture the whole gang before we return."

Jesse touched his companion on the shoulder.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"He makes me tired," was the reply.

"I wonder if the boys are across the river?" asked Jesse.

"They ought to be, by this time," said Younger.

Jesse remained silent a moment, and then whispered:

"I hope they are still on this bank. I have a scheme."

"What is it?"

"I'm going to hold up a steamboat."

"How can you do that?"

"Wait and see."

"Well," said Younger, "you'd better get out of this scrape before you make plans for the future."

"We'll get out all right."

"How?"

"Didn't you make the proposition to shoot our way out?"

"True, but I didn't expect to fight a dozen officers."

"The more the merrier," said Jesse.

"Now," said the sheriff, on the other side of the door, "I infer that there is a secret passage leading from this cellar."

"Yes."

"I want it guarded. Show some of my men the entrance, and you may rest assured that the robbers will not escape by that way."

"And you?"

"Oh, I shall take three or four men and go down into the cellar."

"You'll get your head shot off before you get half-way down," said the dealer. "Why not have the men go in from the other way?"

"That's a good idea," replied the sheriff. "Show them where it is, and let them drive the rascals up the stairs. I'll await them here."

"Alone?"

"Hardly. When you go down, send up three of my men. I guess two to one will be about right."

The dealer, closely followed by the local officers and the loungers who had collected in the room, went on downstairs.

For an instant the sheriff was alone in the room.

He was just congratulating himself on his good luck, when he heard the sharp click of a spring, and the next moment a gust of cold, damp air struck his face.

"Good-evening, sheriff."

The official looked up to see two revolvers pointed at his heart.

"Don't move," said Jesse, with a smile, "for I might mistake your intention, and send an ounce of lead in your direction."

"You have the drop," said the sheriff, calmly.

"You're a nervy chap," said Jesse. "I've a great mind to let you go back to your friends."

"What else could you do?"

Jesse pointed to the dead body on the floor, which, in the excitement, had not been removed.

"I intended putting you alongside of that chap," he said.

"You have everything your own way," said the sheriff.

There came a knock at the door, which the sheriff had locked after the departure of the local officers.

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"Your assistants, I suppose?" said Jesse, turning to the sheriff.

"Yes."

"Tell them to go away."

The sheriff walked toward the door.

"Boys," he said.

His answer was another knock on the door.

The officer's face was pale as death.

He glanced around the room for an instant, and then went on:

"Boys, the James boys are in this room."

Jesse sprang forward with an oath, but the sheriff went on:

"I'll be dead in a minute, but never mind that."

Younger, whom the officer had mistaken for Frank James, seized the nervy fellow by the throat.

But the sheriff was a powerful man, and managed to finish the sentence:

"Break down the door, and shoot the devils at sight!"

Cole Younger leveled his revolver at the officer's heart, and was about to fire.

Jesse stopped him.

"He's too good a man to die like this," shouted the outlaw. "Hit him over the head."

The next moment the brave officer fell to the floor, knocked senseless by a blow from the handle of a heavy revolver.

"He'll be all right for a short time," said Younger, stepping toward the door.

"If there were more officers like him," said Jesse, "they would soon make it too hot for us."

"Correct."

The men outside had procured axes by this time, and were chopping away at the heavy door.

Younger darted to the rear end of the room and raised a curtain.

"It's only a short distance to the ground," he said. "We can jump out without much risk."

At that minute a party of armed men swept around the corner of the building.

"Windows are for sneak thieves," replied Jesse. "Come here and unlock the door, and have your guns ready."

Younger did not delay a moment.

The door opened unexpectedly.

The crowd of man hunters on the landing fell back in amazement at the bold move.

"Down with your guns!" shouted Jesse.

Every hand dropped.

"You're a lot of cowards!" cried Jesse James. "The only brave officer in the house lies there on the floor. Get downstairs!"

The frightened officers obeyed the order, almost falling over each other in their haste to get out of range of the guns of the dreaded robbers.

One fellow, standing in the hall below, fired at the advancing outlaws.

It was his last shot.

Before he could lower his hand, he fell to the floor, with a bullet in his brain.

"If there is another shot fired," said Jesse, "we'll open on the whole of you."

After that the officers couldn't get down the stairs fast enough.

Jesse saw that a crowd was collecting in front of the house.

"There'll be some shooting when we step outside," he whispered to Younger.

And there was.

As the outlaws dashed out into the darkness, a volley of bullets rattled around them.

The fire was returned, and the officers fell back.

They were not doing very good shooting, and the robbers remained uninjured.

Quick as a flash, Jesse and his companion darted into the shelter of the bushes lining the river bank, shooting as they went.

The officers were completely demoralized.

Their leader lay upstairs unconscious, and they did not know what course to pursue.

Before they could decide upon any plan of action, the outlaws were out of pistol shot.

"Look for a boat," whispered Jesse, as the two men hastened along in the darkness. "We must make for the other side of the river."

"If the boys hear the shooting," said Younger, "they will be down here."

In a moment the hawk-like eyes of the outlaws caught sight of a small boat tied to a stake on the bank of the river.

It had evidently been used recently, for the oars were in the pins, ready for use.

The two men sprang in, and pushed out into the stream.

The night was so dark that there was no danger of their being discovered by those on the river bank.

"That was a close call," said Younger, pulling lustily toward the opposite side.

"There was no great danger," replied Jesse. "We ran a greater risk at the bank."

Half-way across the stream, a dark object loomed up before the little boat.

"It is the ferry," said Jesse. "The men are getting the horses across."

Such was indeed the case.

Jesse gave a signal well known to the members of his band.

The heavy scow used as a ferryboat stopped for a moment, and then drifted slowly down with the current.

"Take us on board."

Ropes were thrown out, and the two men were soon on the boat.

"Where did you fellows come from?" demanded the ferryman, suspiciously.

"We came up out of the river," said Jesse. "Turn your boat down stream, if you want to keep a whole hide."

"Where do you want to go?" demanded the ferryman.

"We'll tell you when to stop," was the reply.

"What was the shooting up there?" asked the fellow, turning the boat according to the orders he had received.

"Shooting at the mark," said Younger.

Leaving the ferryman to manage the boat, the outlaws assembled at the front end of the scow.

Frank James and Jim White were the only ones there.

"Where are the others?" asked Jesse.

"They went across half an hour ago," replied Frank.

"We'll have to pick them up," said Jesse. "This is easier than riding across country."

"You're right about that," said Frank, "but I'm afraid it is not as safe."

"It's safe enough," was the reply.

In a short time a call came from the opposite bank of the river.

"There they are," said Frank.

"Yes, we must get them aboard, but we must be careful, for we are right onto Clarksville."

The scow was anchored, and Jesse went to the shore in a little rowboat.

In a very short time the outlaws were all on the ferry-boat.

"Now we'll have a quiet time," said Younger.

Just then the sound of a pistol shot came from the north bank of the stream.

"A signal," whispered Frank.

"Yes," replied Jesse. "Tell the boys to keep still. If the boatman makes a noise, put him to sleep and throw him overboard."

In a moment an answering shot came from farther up the river.

Then came the noise of boats putting out.

"They mean business," said Frank. "It is probable that there'll be some shooting done. Did they get you cornered up there at the landing?" he continued, turning to Jesse.

"They thought they had us cornered," was the reply.

"Listen."

"There's a steamboat coming down."

"Right you are."

"The officers will board it and pass us. Then there will be a fine ruction."

It was Cole Younger who spoke.

"Wait and see."

The boat made the landing the ferryboat had left and tied up.

"They are foolish if they take that boat," said Jesse. "We can land anywhere, while they cannot."

Jesse walked back to the ferryman.

"Can we cut across country here," he asked, "and head off that steamboat?"

"You might, if we could land."

"Run the boat in shore; we can land easily enough."

"What are you going to do?" asked Frank.

"I'm going to ride across a point here," was the reply, "and hold up that steamboat, officers and all."

CHAPTER VI.

HOLDING UP A STEAMBOAT.

The red light of a torch flared up on the south bank of the Cumberland River.

A short distance above, a steamboat was slowly churning its way toward the Mississippi.

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES.

It was quite dark, and the wooded shores on either side were just bare outlines of shadows, seeming a little darker than the open spaces of the air.

Frank and Jesse James, Cole Younger and George Shephard stood on the prow of the boat, talking together in whispers.

"There is the first signal," said Jesse. "We must get ready for the work we came here to do."

"Can you hear anything of the boats?" asked Frank.

"Nothing; the steamer makes too much noise," was the reply.

"Don't worry about the boats," said Younger. "The boys will be on hand to pick us out of the water."

"And, in the meantime," said Jesse, "what shall we do with that sheriff and his deputies?"

"He's a nervy devil," said Younger. "Let's take his guns and let him go."

"He wouldn't do that to us," said Shephard.

"We'll see how he acts."

A second torch flared up on the river bank, and died out.

"There's the second signal," said Frank.

"All right, boys, here goes. You know your places."

As he spoke, Jesse started away, walked soberly down the long cabin, and stopped at the door of the clerk's office.

Younger took a position not far from the pilot, and Frank James and Shephard stood only a few paces distant from their leader.

The clerk was making up his accounts, preparatory to retiring for the night, and quite a large sum in banknotes lay on the desk.

The door of the safe was open.

The clerk looked up as Jesse made his appearance, impatiently ordered him away, and went on with his work.

Three men who had been standing in the shadow now advanced toward the clerk's office, regarding Jesse intently as they did so.

One of the men was the sheriff of Logan County, Kentucky.

The other men were deputy sheriffs.

Believing that the outlaws had escaped down the river, after the incidents at the landing near Clarksville, the sheriff had taken the steamer in order to head them off.

"Yes," said the sheriff, in a whisper, "that is Jesse James. I thought I could not be mistaken."

"Three men got on the boat with him," said one of the deputies.

"Pals, probably," said the sheriff.

"Two of the men are there with him now," said the deputy. "I wonder if they are up to some deviltry?"

"Impossible," replied the sheriff. "Perhaps they have discovered that they are in a trap, and want the clerk to let them off."

"Shall we take them now?"

"No," replied the sheriff, "not unless they attempt to get off. We must do the work as quietly as possible. The fellows may shoot, and we don't want to have any of the passengers injured."

Frank James and Shephard stepped closer to the sheriff and his deputies.

A motion from Jesse had placed them on their guard.

They did not know who the men were, but Jesse did, for he recognized the sheriff as the nervy officer he had faced in the faro-room.

While Frank and Shephard knew the officer was on board, they had no idea that he was watching them so closely.

"We will not take your guns and let you go," thought Frank, "if you keep on acting like this."

Each outlaw grasped two revolvers.

The sheriff saw the movement.

He was about to spring forward, when one of the deputies seized him by the arm.

"Look there!" he cried.

Jesse James had opened the door of the clerk's office.

There was no longer any doubt as to what his intentions were.

The clerk tried to reach a weapon, but the outlaw's revolver held him in check.

Jesse thrust a bag into the hands of the clerk.

"Pack up that stuff," he said.

Again the clerk reached for a weapon.

A bullet from Jesse's pistol cut away a lock of his hair.

"Try that again," said the outlaw, "and I'll put a hole through your head. Pack up that stuff."

The trembling clerk started to obey.

At that instant the sheriff and his deputies called out that there was help at hand, and sprang forward.

The next minute they found themselves looking down the shining barrels of four revolvers.

Frank James and Shephard had the drop on them.

"Throw up your hands, gentlemen," commanded the former. "You see, we were up to your little game."

There was nothing else for the officers to do, and up went their hands in the air.

Jesse turned for an instant from the clerk.

"Take away their guns, and handcuff them," he said. "You will find the irons in their pockets."

"Good idea," said Frank.

The work was done in short order, and then Frank threw the keys to the handcuffs into the river.

"You won't need them to-night," he said to the sheriff, with a smile.

"I had intended them for a different use," said the officer, looking down toward his wrists.

In the meantime the clerk was throwing the money into the bag Jesse had given him.

All was excitement on the boat.

The shot fired by Jesse had aroused the passengers and the crew.

The mate rushed forward, with an iron bar in his hand.

Before he could raise his hand to strike, he fell dead on the deck, shot through the heart.

The passengers began to crowd toward the office, many of them not being aware of what was going on.

"Stand back, every one of you," shouted the outlaw leader, "or you will get a taste of lead."

The captain of the boat now made his appearance.

He was a heavy, bullying fellow, and thought to end the whole matter in a moment.

"Jump on their necks, boys!" he shouted. "Call up the deckhands!"

He darted forward as he spoke.

There was a sharp report, and the captain lunged forward, and lay on the deck, in a pool of blood.

The deckhands came up on a run.

They were reckless, devil-may-care fellows, and for an instant the outlaws feared serious trouble from them.

"Hurry!" shouted Jesse to the clerk. "Take the stuff out of the safe, and put it in the bag with the rest."

"It is all there," said the clerk.

"Then put your revolvers in," said Jesse, "and be careful to keep the muzzles pointed toward yourself while you have them in your hands. The ones I hold might go off."

The clerk lost no time in obeying orders.

Jesse then seized the bag, and turned to the group of passengers.

"Get into your rooms," he said, "and no one will be injured."

There was a great scampering, and in a moment not a passenger was in sight.

There remained only the deckhands to deal with.

A few shots drove them pell-mell into the hold.

Then Jesse gave a peculiar whistle.

The next moment the voice of Cole Younger rang out.

"Now, pilot, if you want to keep a whole hide, make for the south bank."

"It will wreck the vessel," was the cool reply.

Younger sent a ball within an inch of the pilot's left ear.

"Make for the shore," he repeated. "The next bullet will pass through, instead of by, your head."

The boat swung slowly toward the south bank.

As it did so, a large rowboat shot out from the shore.

"There are the boys!" shouted Younger.

"All ready, there!" came from below.

"Now, boys!"

The outlaws sprang for the side of the steamer, and leaped into the Cumberland.

Then, in an incredibly short space of time, they were seated in the rowboat, wet but happy.

"I have always wanted to hold up a steamer," said Jesse, wringing the water out of his coat.

The passengers and crew now swarmed to the side of the steamer.

Now that the outlaws were gone, they were all very brave.

A few who possessed revolvers began to shoot at the rowboat.

They shot wildly, however, and no one was injured.

A volley from the Winchesters of the outlaws soon put a stop to the shooting.

The pilot headed the steamer for the middle of the river again.

The outlaws turned their boat into a little creek, and rested on their oars.

"Where are the horses?" asked Jesse.

"Over there, in a hollow," was the reply.

"Well, get them out."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES.

"They won't be worth much to-morrow if we ride to-night," said Frank James.

"But we must get away from this landing," replied Jesse. "That steamer will stop at the first possible place and turn a horde of reward-hunting yahoos after us."

"I wonder how the sheriff likes his trip?" laughed Younger.

"He'll have a fine time getting those bracelets off," said Jesse.

"Let him attend to affairs in his own county, then," said Frank. "I am half sorry we didn't kill him."

The men mounted their horses, and rode through dark forest highways for several hours.

Just at daylight they halted in a piece of timber, not far from the bank of the river.

"We'll have to stay here all day," said Jesse. "Anything to eat in the crowd?"

"Very little," replied Frank.

"Then I'll have to hustle," said Jesse. "The boys must eat in order to keep their spirits up."

"Hustle?" said Younger. "Where can you find anything to eat in this country?"

"There must be farmhouses beyond this belt of woods," said Jesse.

The leader started away alone, but Cole Younger insisted on going with him.

After riding through the woods for some distance, they came to a large tract of tilled land.

"There's some young cattle over there," said Younger, pointing to a barnyard not far from a farmhouse.

"I'll go and buy one," said Jesse.

"Buy one?" repeated Younger, in amazement.

"These poor devils have all they can do to get along," said Jesse, without our taking their cattle. The farm is probably mortgaged a foot deep."

The outlaws rode up to the gate and stopped.

They would have gone on to the door, but a dozen dogs sprang out at them the moment they attempted to alight.

Younger drew his revolver.

"Hold on," said Jesse. "That won't do. We must not stir the people up until we get a bit of meat."

In a moment an old woman opened the door and called the dogs away.

"They act mighty bad," she said, by way of apology.

Jesse was not long in informing the woman of the purpose of the visit.

"Strangers in these parts, I reckon?" asked the woman.

"Yes."

"Goin' down?"

"Yes. Can we get some beef or mutton?"

"I reckon. See what the ol' man says."

The old man, when he finally came to the door, was very red of face and very heavy of eye.

The wrinkled hand he placed on the rough fence shook violently.

"Down to the landin' with the boys last night," he said, in explanation of his condition.

Jesse passed out a bottle of whisky, which he always carried, but rarely used.

"That'll help you out," he said.

The old man drank greedily.

He heard what the robbers had to say about buying some meat, and then hastened to the barn, a large structure, a short distance down the road.

As he entered the building, a boy about twelve years of age left the house and joined him.

In a few moments a horse galloped away from the barn, going in the opposite direction from that in which the outlaws were.

"That's singular," said Younger. "Why does the rider sneak away like that?"

"It does seem as if he might have taken the road," replied Jesse.

"There's treachery here," said Younger.

The old man now made his appearance.

"Have you sent away for what we want?" demanded Jesse.

"Sent the boy after a bottle," was the reply. "My head feels big's a washtub."

"It was evident that the old man was lying.

He left them in a moment, and began to chase a flock of sheep about a pasture not far away.

"He is not trying to catch one," said Younger. "He is doing that to keep us here until the men he has sent after arrive."

This was the truth.

News of the bank raid and the fight near Clarksville had preceded the outlaws down the river, and the old man, in company with a dozen or more of his neighbors, had been out hunting for the outlaws all the latter part of the night.

At that moment a score of armed men were in camp on the river bank, only a short distance away.

"We ought to have stolen a calf," said Jesse. "I never tried to do the square thing in my life that it didn't get me into trouble."

The farmer finally left the sheep and darted into the house.

A moment later he reappeared, with a gun in his hands.

Then a dozen or more mounted men swung around a corner, and rode straight at the outlaws.

They were between the outlaws and their friends.

"Here's another case of fight," said Jesse, drawing his revolvers.

CHAPTER VII.

IN A BURNING BUILDING.

The position in which Jesse James and Cole Younger found themselves was indeed a desperate one.

Their horses had been traveling all night, and were, therefore, unable to cope with the fresher animals of the pursuers.

"Our only hope seems to lie in getting help from the boys," said Younger.

"They'll come fast enough when they hear the shooting," said Jesse, "but they may come too late."

The pursuers opened fire, although they were still too far away to make their shots count.

The outlaws were about to dash away in the opposite direction, when a cloud of dust down the road attracted their attention.

"We are surrounded!" shouted Younger.

Jesse forced his horse over the fence, and rode him into the barn, the doors of which stood open.

Younger followed, and the two men were soon engaged in closing the entrances to the place.

"Now let them shoot," said Jesse. "The more powder they burn, the quicker the boys will get here."

The man-hunters dismounted and crept toward the barn, taking care to keep in the shelter of trees and fences.

Presently a voice cried out:

"You may as well surrender. You can never get out of the barn alive."

The only answer was a pistol shot.

Then the old farmer thrust his head from behind a tree.

"Come out an' get that sheep," he said.

The remark raised a little laugh among the farmers, but in a moment the merriment died away.

The old man fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

He had kept his head in sight a moment too long.

"The old fellow would have done better to have sold the sheep and kept his mouth shut," said Younger, who had fired the fatal shot.

"All traitors should be served in the same way," replied Jesse.

The besiegers drew back for consultation, and the outlaws saw, with a good deal of satisfaction, that they had left their horses some distance in the rear.

Directly the farmers scattered, taking safe positions on every side of the barn.

"They mean to starve us out," said Younger.

There were but two entrances to the barn, and the outlaws watched these very closely.

The farmers amused themselves by shooting at the knotholes in the structure, making a great noise, but doing no damage.

Occasionally the outlaws were summoned to surrender, but they made no reply, unless they saw a good mark to shoot at.

"It's a wonder the boys don't come up," said Jesse, after a time. "I'm getting tired of this."

"They will be here all right," replied Younger.

"Takes them a long time to get here," said Jesse, impatiently.

Younger, who was industriously enlarging a small crack in the door, in order that he might have a better chance to shoot if a rush was made, now called Jesse to his side.

"You see that line of bushes out there?" he asked, when Jesse stood by his side.

"Yes."

"Well, that's where they left their horses."

"What of it?" demanded Jesse.

"Wait and see," was the reply.

Presently a horse moved across a clear space at one end of the line of shrubbery.

In a moment another followed, and another, and another.

"What does it mean?" demanded Younger.

Jesse waved his hat in the air and almost danced in his excitement.

"Can't you guess?" he asked.

"No. What are you acting that way for?"

"The boys are back there stealing their horses."

Younger looked in the face of his leader with a blank expression in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "The boys would be pumping lead into those yahoos out there, if they were within shooting distance."

"They'll do that, after they take care of the horses," was the reply. "That is one of Frank's schemes to keep them from following us."

The outlaws watched until the horses had all disappeared, and then Jesse went back to his post.

"It won't be long now," he said.

"I hope not," was the reply, "for I'm hungry enough to eat a St. Louis pancake."

The firing continued, but the men in the barn were in no danger whatever.

"It strikes me," said Jesse, in a moment, "that there is some trick about all this shooting."

"What trick can there be?"

"I don't know. We'll soon find out."

"I suppose," said Younger, "the boys will dash down here with a couple of fresh horses as soon as they get the mounts of the grangers out of the way."

"Of course."

"Then the lead crop will be going in the opposite direction," said Younger, grimly.

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES.

"Do you smell anything peculiar?" asked Jesse, after a short silence in the barn.

"There is something strange about the atmosphere in here."

"What does it seem like?"

"Smoke."

"You've struck it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"The devils have set fire to the barn."

"Impossible."

"That's what they have done," insisted Jesse.

Younger sniffed the air vigorously for a moment, and then replied:

"I guess you're right. It looks as if we had played the game out."

"Not much," was the reply. "I'm going down South, and will draw that big lottery prize before I hand in my checks."

"If we stay here," said Younger, "we'll be burned to death, and if we go out we'll be shot down. It looks tough."

"You forget the boys are out there."

"They can't put out the fire, nor they can't stop bullets," said the disgusted outlaw.

"You'll see what they'll do."

The flames could now be seen mounting the side of the barn.

In a moment more the haymow would be reached, and then the whole interior of the building would be filled with hot, stifling smoke.

"Say," called out a voice from the outside, "when it gets too warm in there, just step outside."

"We'll take the price of the barn out of the reward offered for the James boys," cried another voice.

The flames reached the hay, and the outlaws were obliged to place their faces to cracks in the boards, in order to breathe.

Then a new horror threatened them.

The hay was burning away on one side, and was likely to topple over, burying them in a sea of flame.

They listened impatiently for some indication that their friends were on hand.

"I can't stand this," cried Jesse, springing to the door. "I had rather die by bullet than by fire."

At that instant a shot rang out.

Then the tramp of hoofs reached the ears of the waiting men.

"They have come at last."

All was confusion on the outside.

The outlaws, under the leadership of Frank James, dashed down upon the farmers, shooting right and left.

There were but few answering shots.

The farmers made for their horses, their intention being to prepare for a chase after the daring robbers.

But their horses were not where they had been left.

The outlaws rushed to the main entrance of the barn.

There was no need to tell them what was going on.

The farmers, abandoning the search for their horses, formed in a line directly in front of them.

At that instant the door opened, and a volley of shots came from the weapons of the two men who were believed to be slowly burning to death in the building.

A muscular fellow, the one who had proposed burning the outlaws alive in the barn, dashed up to Jesse and tried to throw him to the ground.

He did not know the man he had taken hold of.

With one mighty blow, Jesse sent him staggering backward toward the burning barn.

His foot tripped on a timber, and he fell into the fire.

A cry of horror arose from the farmers.

"Howl!" shouted Jesse, "howl, you devils! Let your leader burn in the blazing hell he prepared for me."

At that moment the agonizing whinny of a horse was heard in the blazing structure.

Ignoring alike the warnings of his friends and the shots of his enemies, Jesse dashed into the cloud of smoke which hung over the place.

In a short time he reappeared, leading two horses by the bits.

In order to control the animals, Jesse had thrown heavy blankets over their eyes.

In the absence of this precaution, the horses would have rushed into the barn again.

"I couldn't let the poor brutes burn alive," said the outlaw, taking possession of one of the extra horses the outlaws had brought.

For a few moments the battle was a hot one, and then the farmers drew back.

They had had enough of hunting Jesse James and his gang.

Then the outlaws set spurs to their horses, and galloped away.

The barn burned to the ground, but was never rebuilt with the rewards offered for the capture of Frank and Jesse James, "dead or alive."

"And now," said Jesse James, as the party halted on the bank of the Cumberland River again, "all we have to do is to move on toward the south, and draw that big prize in old man Pratt's lottery."

"When is the drawing?" asked Frank.

"In three days."

"And are you going to get the money in the way you proposed yesterday?" asked Younger.

"Certainly."

"I like your nerve," said Younger.

"My nerve is all right," was the laughing reply. "I always carry it in my whiskers."

CHAPTER VIII.

DRAWING THE BIG PRIZE.

The great drawing!

One hundred thousand dollars for a bit of pasteboard!

The splendid Southern city was crowded with strangers.

They could not all draw the magnificent prize, but all who could crowd into the opera-house might at least see it.

Jesse and Frank James and Cole Younger were sitting in the rear room of a drinking-place on a principal street, not far from the opera-house.

"Where are the boys?" asked Jesse, who had been absent from the gang nearly all the morning, laying plans for the desperate rush which was soon to be made.

"They are waiting at a little saloon close to the stage entrance to the opera-house," was the reply, "and their horses are ready."

"They are not showing themselves?"

"No, they are to remain quiet, unless there is a fight when we pass out of the building with the money."

"This money will enable us to rest for a spell," said Jesse. "We have the hundred thousand taken from the bank, the steamboat money and this prize will make nearly twenty thousand apiece. Quite a neat sum, eh?"

"Yes," replied Frank, "and not a man killed in getting it—not a man of our party, I mean."

"We have been very lucky," said Jesse, looking at his watch, "and we shall soon know whether our luck is to hold out, for it is time to be moving."

As the three men passed into the public room, Jesse noticed two men standing at the bar drinking.

They were watching his every movement by means of the big mirror behind the bar.

Cole Younger touched the outlaw's arm.

"Those men were in the gambling-house near Clarksville," he said, in a whisper.

"That's right," replied Jesse.

The outlaws walked on to the front door and turned sharply about.

The two men were following them.

There was no doubt that they had been recognized.

"It looks bad," said Jesse. "What can we do to get those fellows off the track?"

"Shoot them off," said Younger.

"Correct," said Frank.

"And get the whole city out after us," replied Jesse.

"That will never do."

"Then lead them to the place where the boys are," said Frank. "They will take care of them."

"Good idea," observed Younger.

"But they may notify the officers while on the way there," said Jesse.

"That's a fact."

"I have a plan," said Younger. "I'll step in some place until they pass, and then follow along behind. If they stop to talk with any one I'll shoot them both dead in their tracks."

"And then?"

"And then I'll get out of town, going to the place agreed upon, while you draw the capital prize."

This seemed to be the only feasible plan, and Younger dropped behind the party.

The men followed on after Jesse and Frank, little thinking how near they were to death.

At the very entrance to the place where the boys were waiting, one of the men stepped up to Jesse.

"You needn't dodge," he said. "I am not going to make you any trouble."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jesse, placing his hand on a weapon.

"It's all right," replied the other, "come in and have a drink."

There was treachery in the fellow's eye.

Jesse walked into the place with the two men and stood up to the bar.

The members of his party were sitting around the room drinking and playing cards.

After taking a light drink Jesse proposed a game, and the two men were soon sitting behind huge stacks of chips.

They wanted to win the outlaw's money before turning them over to the officers!

But they lost steadily.

Presently one of them arose and explained that he was going out after more money.

Jesse knew why he wanted to go out.

He was going to call the officers.

As he rose from his chair, Younger, who had been on the watch for just such a movement, dealt him a blow which sent him sprawling on the floor.

Jesse served the other man in the same way.

Both men were unconscious.

"What does this mean?" demanded the bartender.

"They cheated," said Frank, coolly.

The bartender was used to just such scenes, and said no more about it, only ordering the porter to convey the unconscious men to a rear room.

Jesse went into the back room and saw that there was a door opening from it toward the rear.

Then he went back to the bartender.

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES.

"I want one of these men to watch those fellows," he said. "I don't want to be arrested for assault and battery until after the big drawing."

He laid a ten-dollar bill on the counter as he spoke.

"All right."

The bartender shoved the bill into his pocket as he spoke.

As Jesse went out he whispered to Shephard:

"Shoot them if they try to get away."

After seeing that the horses of the entire party were hitched in a convenient place, the two James boys and Cole Younger entered the opera-house.

The stage was rapidly filling with people, and the outlaws at once went to the wings by way of a box and stood waiting.

"What do you want here?" demanded an official.

"Committee from Kentucky," said Jesse.

"We want no committees here," said the officer. "Get off."

"We came here to see fair play," said Frank.

"Get off."

"Let them alone," cried a voice which the outlaws recognized as that of Mott. "We want everybody satisfied."

The officer went away grumbling.

"Watch that fellow," whispered Jesse. "He's the man the bank clerk told us about."

Younger walked boldly across the stage to where Mott stood, just in the edge of the fourth entrance.

"Where's the big prize?" he asked.

Mott pointed to a leather bag lying on a table.

"There it is," he said. "It has just arrived."

The man in charge of the drawings now rapped for order, and Mott advanced to the center of the stage with the boxes containing the numbers and the tickets.

The huge wheels were already in place.

Then he went back to the wing and came back with the leather bag.

At that moment Younger saw a giant of a fellow pick up a valise and make for the door with it.

His suspicions were at once aroused. He did not know what was in the valise, but he knew that it contained something valuable, and the outlaws were there after everything in sight.

"Wait," he said, "you can't take anything away just yet. The drawing is about to begin."

"Who are you?" demanded the giant.

Before Younger could reply, a telegraph messenger dashed down the aisle with a yellow envelope in his hand.

"For Andrew Pratt," he shouted.

The message was handed up, and Pratt was soon reading it.

He turned pale as death.

At that instant the blindfolded boys stepped forward, and the big wheels were sent whirling around.

Pratt appeared to be fainting, and was taken from the stage.

Before those in charge of the drawing could announce the result of the first whirl, a man sprang into the aisle and shouted:

"Have a care there. The James boys are on the stage!"

One of the men had escaped from the saloon!

The audience sprang forward, and more than one woman fainted at the mention of that dreaded name.

Younger snatched the valise from the giant's trembling hand and threw it on the table.

"The first ticket out draws the big prize."

The three outlaws were in the center of the stage with drawn revolvers.

The people on the stage fell back.

There was practically no resistance.

The outlaws seized the bag and the valise and started away.

At the stage door two officers opposed their passage.

"Out of the way, or off goes your heads," shouted Jesse.

"Stop them," shouted Mott. "They have stolen the money."

"Shoot them," yelled one of the officials of the drawing; "they are the James boys."

Mott and the giant, seeing that bolder efforts than their own had won, drew their revolvers and began shooting.

When they reached the stage door they saw the three men they were pursuing sitting on their horses, surrounded by a dozen armed men.

The next moment there was a ringing of hoofs, and the outlaws dashed away with their prize.

"We had the winning ticket," said Jesse, tapping his revolver.

All was confusion in the opera-house.

While the outlaws were dashing down the street, shooting to the right and left, calling to the crowd to keep back, the lottery people were calling to the officers to protect them and their money.

Mott and the giant hastened back to the stage to meet Pratt with a revolver in each hand and the light of insanity in his eyes.

"You are to blame for it all," he yelled, firing shot after shot at his trembling confederates.

Before he could be stopped, both men were dead.

Then the old man turned one of the pistols toward his breast and fired.

The next moment he lay dead on the stage.

Then an officer picked up the telegram the old man had received and read it.

It was from a trusted agent in the Kentucky village. Warrants were out for both Pratt and Mott.

The sudden destruction of all his plans had rendered the old man insane.

The James boys and their followers made their way out of the city with little difficulty, and were soon hid in their old haunts in Missouri.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 39) will contain "The James Boys Driven to the Wall; or, The Three Lives of Wild Decatur," a thrilling account of the James boys' fights with Mexican cavalry and outlaw enemies.

Send in your exchange notices, boys. We will publish them all in a special "Exchange Department."

ABOUT FAMOUS MEN.

Only one week more of the Contest, boys!

Everybody has a chance to win one of the valuable prizes offered. Don't miss this opportunity, but send in your article at once.

Following are some of the best articles received during the week.
Read them, and then send in your own!

The Hero of Manila.

(By Charles E. Bowers, Hanover, Pa.)

Admiral Dewey was born a Vermonter sixty-one years ago and was appointed to the Naval Academy from that State in 1854, and four years later graduated and was sent aboard the steam frigate Wabash for a cruise in the Mediterranean.

Dewey got his commission as a lieutenant in 1861 and was immediately assigned to join the Mississippi gunboat and do duty with the West Gulf Squadron.

The hottest fight the Mississippi was ever engaged in was her last one, and this was perhaps as hot as any one of the war. In March, 1863, the fleet tried to run by the Confederate batteries at Port Hudson. Some of the ships got as far as a narrow part of the channel, where they met land batteries almost muzzle to muzzle, and then they were forced to retreat, the Mississippi did not get as far as this. A foggy day had been chosen for the attempt, and this was soon made more obscure by the smoke of the battle, and amid this the Mississippi lost her bearings and ran ashore.

Her officers found that she had struck just under the guns of a battery, and one of the strongest of the lot. In half an hour 250 shots struck the vessel and she was riddled from end to end. There was no chance to hold her, and the crew took to their boats and landed on the opposite shore after having set her on fire. Soon, lightened by the loss of the crew and by the fire, she drifted off and blazing and saluting with bursting shells she drifted down the river until finally the fire reached the magazines, and her career was ended in one great explosion.

Dewey was next attached to the gunboat Agawan, and took part in two attacks on that vessel. In 1865 he got his commission as lieutenant-commander, and as such served on the famous old Kearsarge, and on the Colorado, until 1868, when he was sent for service to the Naval Academy.

His first command was in 1870, when he had the Narragansett for special service. He became a commander in April, 1872. He got his commission as com-

modore on February, 1896, and was at about the same time made president of the Board of Inspection and Survey. This place he held until he was put in command of the Asiatic Squadron in 1898. At last the chivalrous deed which he accomplished at Manila astonished the whole civilized world and it happened on May 1. It is said that those men that fought under the already mentioned famous patriot, Admiral Farragut, were not afraid to stand, "while the shot and shell were streaming upon the great battleships."

It was as Dewey said that in his early experience under that fighting hero of the Mississippi River, Farragut, that combats are decided more by skill in gunnery and the quality of guns than by anything else, and another lesson learned is that first-class men are required behind those terrible spitfires which don our big fighting monsters. This was the case at Manila. With good men and a renowned commander, they decapitated the entire Spanish fleet.

Being well aware that he is a brave man, as well as having done chivalrous deeds, I greatly admire him and know that with his sterling qualities he is one of our greatest heroes.

When Sheridan Came.

(By Bernard Schleuter, St. Louis, Mo.)

About the middle of October, 1864, Sheridan went to Washington, and while on his way back slept on the night of October 18 at Winchester.

At 7 a. m. on the 19th, he heard guns, but paid no attention to the sounds till nine o'clock, when, as he rode quietly out of Winchester, he met a mile from town wagon trains and fugitives, and heard that Early had surprised his camp at daybreak. Dashing up the pike with an escort of twenty men, calling to the fugitives as he passed them to turn and face the enemy he met the army drawn up in line eleven miles from Winchester.

"Far away in the rear," said an old soldier, "we heard cheer after cheer. Were re-enforcements coming? Yes, Phil Sheridan was coming, and he was a host

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES.

Dashing down the line, Sheridan shouted: "What troops are these?"

"The sixth corps," came back the response from a hundred voices. "We are all right," said Sheridan, as he swung his old hat and dashed along the line to the right. "Never mind, boys, we'll whip them yet. We shall sleep in our old quarters to-night."

And they did. Early was defeated.

The Arkansas Boy Spy.

(By Charles Pitzold, East Boston, Mass.)

When the Confederate Army abandoned Little Rock in 1863, one of its military operators, David O. Dodd, stayed back and lived some time in the Union lines. He was a lad of seventeen. Shortly after the town was Unionized he left there, ostensibly to go to Mississippi, but returned in a few days and lingered about in his old haunts. A second time he passed out of the picket lines, unrestrained, until he reached the outposts, where the guards, searching him, discovered some pencil marks in a memorandum book carried openly in his pocket.

He was arrested, and at headquarters the marks were shown to be telegraphic dots and dashes that gave a full description of the Union fortifications, and the distribution of forces about the city. His act was that of a spy, and his life was the forfeit. Having admitted that he had accomplices, he was offered pardon if he would betray them. A last appeal was made at the scaffold by his friends and relatives, but he firmly put the temptation aside and signaled the executioner to do his duty. Then the drop fell, carrying him and his secret to another world. My informant, who witnessed the hanging, declared that the lad met his doom with the coolness of a stoic, while the spectators, chiefly soldiers, wept like children.

Patrick Henry, the Famous American Patriot.

(By Edgar S. Poore, Richmond, Va.)

Patrick Henry, another one of my many heroes, was a man of limited education, and in early years displayed few indications of his future greatness. He was exceedingly fond of fishing and hunting, and of social pleasures, all of which were allowed to interfere with his studies. He married at eighteen, failed twice in business, once in an attempt at farming, and finally, when twenty-four years of age, entered the profession of law after six weeks' study of the subject. Of course, he was ignorant of the simplest details of the profession he had undertaken, but his wonderful gift of oratory stood him in good stead, and after the first trial in which he appeared, at the age of twenty-seven, he never lacked for business, although he was never considered remarkable as a lawyer.

The opening scenes of the Revolution fired Patrick Henry's patriotic soul; evidently the time and purpose for which he had been born had arrived. His speech before the Virginia House of Burgesses electrified the country, and gained him the reputation, at the age of twenty-nine, of being "the greatest orator and political thinker of a land abounding with public speakers and statesmen."

He declared that the General Assembly of the whole colony had the sole right and power to levy taxes on the inhabitants of the colony. This resolution was adopted, and similar resolutions were taken up in turn and adopted by nearly all of the other colonies. It was everywhere resolved that the Stamp Act should never be enforced. The royal governor of Virginia dissolved the Assembly, but the eloquence of the "Forest-born Demosthenes" traveled throughout the colonies. The oldest American colony had spoken, and the effect was electrical.

This great Virginia orator closed his speech for this resolution with the famous words, "Cæsar had his Brutus; Charles I., his Cromwell, and George III. — — — 'Treason! treason!'" cried some of his hearers. " — — — may profit by their example," continued Henry. "If this be treason, make the most of it."

Buffalo Bill.

(By Carl Solberg, Wisconsin.)

Buffalo Bill was born in Ohio in 1845. Who has been much more of a terror to the Indians than he? His name is famed in a great many countries. Buffalo Bill is not his right name, but only the nickname. William Cody is his right name. He killed 4,280 buffaloes in eighteen months. The Indians feared him. He also killed Yellow Hand, one of the worst Indians of the West. Buffalo Bill carried more messages in dangerous places than any one else would do.

Grover Cleveland.

(By Clarence Waters, Illinois.)

Grover Cleveland, twenty-second and twenty-fourth President of the United States, was born in Caldwell, New Jersey, March 18, 1837. He taught for a time in an institution for blind at Clinton, N. Y. He removed to Buffalo in 1855, and four years later was admitted to the bar. He was very successful, and was elected in turn assistant district attorney, sheriff of the county, and mayor of Buffalo. His enormous majority for the governorship of New York in 1882 gave him national prominence. He was elected President in 1884. In 1888 he was defeated by Benjamin Harrison, but he was nominated for a third time in 1892, and was elected over President Harrison by a large majority.

Life and Death of President Garfield.

(By Zuma Adams, Missouri.)

James A. Garfield was born at Orange, Ohio, in the year of 1831. As soon as he was old enough he was put to work on his father's farm. Later on in youth he served as a pilot on a canal boat, plying the Ohio and Pennsylvania canal. In 1854 he was president of the Hiram College. He gave up this position to become a soldier in the Civil War. He took a great part in the battle of Chickamauga. In 1879 he was elected a Senator of the United States, but before entering upon his duties was nominated and elected to the Presidency.

Just after the adjournment of the Senate in June

President Garfield made arrangements to visit Williams College, where his two sons were to be placed as students.

The President also arranged a short vacation with his wife, who was sick, at the seaside. On the morning of July 2d, accompanied by Secretary Blaine and a few friends, the President entered a Baltimore Railway station at Washington. A moment afterward he was approached by a miserable miscreant named Charles Jules Guiteau, who came unseen behind the President, drew a

pistol and fired upon him. The aim of the assassin was too well taken, and the second shot struck the President in the right side of the back. At first the people thought that he would recover. Two operations were performed, but blood poisoning set in. On the evening of September 19th the anniversary of the battle of Chickamauga, in which Garfield had gained his principal military reputation, he died. Chester A. Arthur, the Vice-President, at once took the oath of office and became the twenty-first President of the United States.

TALES OF HUNTING AND TRAPPING.

BRADY'S ADVENTURE.

By SANDY GRISWOLD.

Samuel Brady, the hero of the following adventure, was over six feet in height, with light blue eyes, fair skin and dark hair. He was remarkably straight and athletic, bold and vigorous, a backwoodsman, inured to all the toils and hardships of a frontier life, and had become very obnoxious to the Indians from his numerous successful attacks on their war parties, and from shooting them while on his hunting excursions, whenever they crossed his path or came within reach of his rifle; for he was personally engaged in more hazardous contests with the savages than any other man west of the mountains, excepting Daniel Boone. He was, in fact, "an Indian hater," as many of the early borderers were.

This class of men appear to have been more numerous in his region than in any other portion of the frontiers, and this, doubtless, arose from the slaughter at Bradock's defeat, and the numerous murders and attacks on defenseless families that for many years followed that disaster. Brady was also a very successful trapper and hunter, and took more beavers than any of the Indians themselves.

In one of his adventurous trapping excursions to the waters of the Beaver River, or Mahoning, which in early days so abounded with animals of this species that it took its name from this fact, it so happened that the Indians surprised him in his camp and took him prisoner.

To have shot or tomahawked him on the spot would have been but a small gratification to that of satiating their revenge by burning him at a slow fire, and in the presence of all the Indians of the village. He was, therefore, taken alive to their encampment, on the west bank of the Beaver River, about a mile and a half from its mouth. After the usual exultations and rejoicings at the capture of a noted enemy, and causing him to run the gantlet, a fire was prepared, near which Brady was placed, after being stripped naked, and with his arms unbound.

Previously to tying him to the stake a large circle was formed around him, consisting of Indian men, women and children, dancing and yelling, and uttering all manner of threats and abuses that their small knowledge of the English language could afford.

The prisoner looked on his savage foes and these preparations for death with a firm countenance and steady eye, meeting all their threats with a truly savage fortitude. In the midst of their rejoicings a squaw of one of their chiefs came near him with a child in her arms. Quick as thought, and with intuitive prescience, he snatched it from her, and threw it in the midst of the flames. Horror-struck at the sudden outrage, the Indians simultaneously rushed to rescue the infant from the fire.

In the midst of this confusion, Brady darted from the circle, overturning all that came in his way, and rushed into the adjacent thicket with the Indians yelling at his heels. He ascended the steep side of the hill, amid a shower of bullets, and darting down the opposite declivity, secreted himself in the deep ravines and laurel thickets that abounded for several miles to the west of it. As the Indians came up he was compelled again to take flight.

In leaving his retreat he was in full view of the Indians. They could easily have shot him, but being bent on taking him alive for torture, and to glut their long-delayed revenge, they forebore the use of their rifles.

He was now again leaving them behind, and the Indians seeing him likely to escape, they all fired upon him. One bullet wounded him severely in the hip, but not so badly as to prevent his progress.

Brady advanced a good distance ahead. His limb was growing stiff from the wound, and as the Indians gained on him, he made for a pond, which now bears his name, and, plunging in, swam under water a considerable distance, and came up under the trunk of a large oak, which had fallen into the pond. This, although leaving only a small breathing place to support life, completely sheltered him from their sight.

The Indians, tracing him by the blood to the water, made diligent search all around the pond, but finding no signs of his exit, finally came to the conclusion that he had sunk and was drowned.

As they were at one time standing on the very tree beneath which he was concealed, Brady, understanding their language, was very glad to hear the result of their deliberations, and after they had gone, weary, lame and hungry, he made good his retreat to his home.

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